



## COUNTY OF ERIE

**MARK C. POLONCARZ**

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

September 6, 2013

Honorable Edward Rath  
Erie County Legislator  
92 Franklin Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Buffalo, New York 14202

**Re: Rath Snowplowing Contract Comments in *Amherst and Clarence Bee***

Dear Legislator Rath:

I read with interest your September 4, 2013 column in the *Amherst Bee* and *Clarence Bee* regarding the snowplowing contract issue between the County and the towns.

As you know, Deputy Budget Director Timothy Callan and I discussed this matter at some length at the Legislature in July 2013 at a committee meeting which you attended, and for which you and Legislator Mills asked questions regarding the snowplowing contract. At that meeting you expressed no opposition to the County's position and based on your comments at that meeting, you appeared to concur with the County's approach. However, in your *Bee* column, for whatever reason, you criticized the County's approach and took a position siding with the towns, which will create new fiscal pressure on the County.

Your column also opined that the County is not negotiating in good faith with the towns, which is not true. Since you have not been present at any meetings between the County and the towns, I don't know what you are basing this statement on. If you are concerned about the contract, please contact me and I will be happy to discuss this matter with you in further detail.

Given the fiscal constraints and issues facing the County, I would have expected that you would endorse the County's position of negotiating a smaller increase in the snowplowing contract with all towns. The fact is the towns will receive a larger payment under a new contract than they received in 2013. The County is simply attempting to limit the increase in the cost to the taxpayers from the towns' request, because, at the end of the day, all taxpayers will have to bear the burden. The County's snowplowing contract expense has increased by 105% from \$2.2 million to \$4.5 million during a

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twelve year period when the Division of Highways' operation and maintenance budget (which includes County snowplowing) has only grown 18%.

Over that twelve year period, inflation rates have been markedly low. Since 2000, the average inflation growth rate has been 2.5% per year with a total growth rate of 32.5% and over the past four years, the inflation rate has been even lower, averaging 1.625% annually. During that time, the towns have received 5% annual increases in their payments for plowing. Given that the Division of Highways' total growth rate over the twelve years has been 18%, and the town snowplowing contract total cost has grown by 105%, the County is simply attempting to hold the line on expense to the benefit of all taxpayers.

If the County can hold the line on such expenses, I believe the towns can operate with similar fiscal restraint, to the benefit of all taxpayers.

Because the County is only on pace through July 2013 to end the year with a \$1 million surplus, of which we must repay \$706,000 of that projected positive variance to the federal government for the October 2006 Storm, I am sure you will agree with me that fiscal prudence is the wisest course of action at this time. As such, I urge you to support the County in our negotiations with the towns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Loffredo".

John Loffredo, PE  
Commissioner of Public Works

cc: Mark C. Poloncarz, County Executive  
Erie County Legislature